Networks of Capital
German Bankers and China’s Financial Internationalisation, 1885-1919

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5pm, October 12, 2016 (Wednesday) FAMES Rooms 8 & 9

Abstract During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, foreign banks were a major presence within the Chinese banking sector. They financed China’s rapidly growing foreign trade, issued their own currencies and provided loans to the Chinese government that allowed China to finance wars, fund industrialisation projects and maintain political stability. However, they have previously either been neglected by the existing scholarship or simply viewed as another manifestation of Western imperialism. By following the history of the Deutsch-Asiatische Bank (DAB 德華銀行) – the main German bank active in China between the 1880s and the First World War – my current research project aims to address this gap in the historiography. My study explores how the interaction between German and other foreign bankers and Chinese officials, bankers and merchants led to the rapid internationalisation of Chinese state finance and the Chinese banking sector on the China coast. I argue that foreign banks were not simply another form of imperialism but acted as nodes within the emerging global network of capital flows and provided the financial infrastructure that made modern economic globalisation in China possible. Moreover, I suggest that an understanding of China’s historical experience with foreign banks and financial internationalisation can also help us comprehend the country’s current engagement with global financial markets, public debt and foreign businesses.

Speaker Ghassan Moazzin is a PhD candidate in Modern Chinese History at the University of Cambridge. He first read Chinese Studies at the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Cambridge, before starting his doctoral research at the same institution. He has spent periods as a visiting scholar at East China Normal University in Shanghai and the Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica in Taipei. His research is based on a wide variety of primary sources collected in Chinese, German and British archives.

All seminars take place on Wednesdays (unless otherwise arranged) at 5pm in rooms 8 & 9 in the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies. Tea will be served at the same venue at 4:45pm. All are welcome!